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Some Like It White

A warmed-up white-on-white palette makes this small home live large for a family of five.

BY PAIGE PORTER PHOTOS EDMUND BARR STYLING MICHAEL WALTERS



CAN-DO SPIRIT

Suzie and Bob Mecay wanted a Dutch cottage for their 1940s cottage, so they cut the original door in half and painted it—and the rest of the house—chalk white.

It wasn't exactly love at first sight," says Suzie Mecay. She and her husband, Bob, were looking for a cozy house for their family, and this modest cottage in Summerland, California, was the right size but the wrong style.

Painted shades of purple, green, and brown, the house was gloomy when they bought it. "The only way to hide all the flaws was to paint it white," Suzie says. Every wall, exposed beam, and ceiling was painted white; the dark carpets were replaced with durable sea-grass rugs. Suzie's first round of furniture—nautical blue-and-white stripes—proved all wrong. "The pattern drove me crazy and made everything feel crowded," she says.



TABLE TALK

There was no formal dining room in the layout, so Suzie created one just off the living room. "The table was meant for our old house, and now it fits perfectly in the space between our kitchen and living room," she says. She built in a hutch to make the area feel more like a dining room.



FULL HOUSE

Suzie created a comfortable seating arrangement, *left*, with big pieces pulled away from the walls and set close together. A black square coffee table is softened by a window shade-turned-runner.

ADDED LAYER

Suzie gave a pair of white slipcovered club chairs, *below*, a boost by layering a raffia runner under the back and seat cushions. The raffia's color and texture play to the wicker and sea grass elsewhere in the house.



Suzie followed her gut and went all out with white. Slipcovers erased the stripes, and accessories in wood and sand tones warmed the pale palette. Suzie outfitted small spaces with large furniture. “Lots of small pieces make a little room feel cluttered and tight, while big, dramatic pieces give the appearance of enlarging it,” she says. “We didn’t need a big house. We just needed a little house that felt bigger than it was.”

"It takes guts to go all white in your house, but it's easy on the eyes and cleans up much better than you'd think." SUZIE MECAY



NATURAL INSTINCTS

Suzie Mecay pulled off a mostly white scheme with notes of warmth in her family's cottage. Borrow these ideas for your own home:

■ **Warming trend** Drape raffia table runners over slipcovered chairs. Pair white with wood furniture and accessories; add butter yellow and almond brown accents.

■ **Shades of pale** Mix and match tones of white on walls, furniture, and window treatments for a richer look.

■ **Bold partner** Be daring and add a few key black pieces of furniture. Strong contrast can add drama to a room. 🏠

QUICK READ

Suzie turned the hallway leading to the bedrooms into a library. The small pass-through functions as a full-blown room, with built-in bookcases, a deep window seat, and a game table for the kids.

For buying information see page 188.